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SUBJECT: BADR ORGANIZATION LEADER AND VICE PRESIDENT
ADVISER HANNAH DISCUSS SECURITY SITUATION

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Robert Gilchrist for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

I1. (C) SUMMARY: Chair of the Council of Representatives Security and Defense Committee and Badr Organization leader Hadi al-Amiri met John Hannah, the National Security Adviser to the Vice President on October 19. Amiri thanked the U.S. for its role in liberating Iraq and helping to build its democracy. Amiri said that security is the main challenge and highlighted several factors that have contributed to the deteriorating security situation: Saddamists, takfiris, organized crime, and sectarian tensions. He blamed MNF-I and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) for helping to create this situation due to the lack of a response to sectarian attacks on communities that has led communities to turn to militias for support and defense. Amiri offered the following suggestions to improve the security situation: identify who is responsible for security in Iraq (between the GOI and MNF-I) and strengthen the Iraqi government by accelerating training of the ISF; provide services in secured areas; ban weapons from non-ISF groups; confront quasi-official militias like the Facilities Protection Service; implement CPA Order 91; put pressure on regional governments to help the GOI rather than support the violence; and activate the judiciary. Amiri denied any Badr involvement in militia activity, or any improper relationship with Iranian intelligence organizations, averring that the group had transformed into a political party. He challenged those who condemn Badr to produce any evidence to the contrary. END SUMMARY.

Progress Politically, But Security Situation Tense

I2. (C) Chair of the Council of Representatives Security and Defense Committee and Badr Organization leader Hadi al-Amiri

expressed thanks to John Hannah, the National Security Adviser to the Vice President on October 19 for America's role in liberating Iraq and helping to build its democracy. He highlighted the many accomplishments in the political process from the Governing Council to the current government.

He expressed appreciation for President Bush and understanding for the difficulties the U.S. currently faces in Iraq, and for the challenges created by America's enemies as well as its friends. He said the main challenge is security and described Iraq as the central front in the war against terrorism. He asserted that Iraq's success as a democracy will radically change the Middle East, a fact that has led neighboring countries to launch a major effort to undermine the new Iraq.

Amiri expressed his belief that all Iraq's challenges can be overcome as long as we have the will to succeed.

¶3. (C) Amiri then highlighted the following factors that have contributed to the current security situation:

-- Saddamists ("I don't say Baathists, whom we need to co-opt"): The real enemy is Saddamists who committed crimes against the Iraqi people

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and continue to do so. Saddamists do not want to participate in the government; rather, they want to destroy it.

-- Takfiris: They have come from outside of Iraq, and they enter into the country through Syria. Once in Iraq, they commit operations against the Iraqi people and MNF-I. The takfiris believe even those who participated in the elections should be killed. Amiri claimed that the takfiris want to establish a Taliban state, but they cannot do so on their own so they are supported by the Saddamists, who provide them with essential facilitation.

-- Organized Crime: Before the war, around 40,000 criminals were released. Because of the instability and lack of security, they have been very active in ransom kidnappings. According to Amiri, these people are not considered a big problem because organized crime is present in all countries.

-- Sectarian Tension: This has become one of the most dangerous factors in the violence. He pointed to Zarqawi's letter that emphasized the Takfiris' strategy of pushing the Sunni and Shi'a into war, so that al-Qaida can remain in Iraq and achieve their goals. Amiri said Zarqawi was successful in creating sectarian tensions, but the tension must be dealt with.

-- Neighboring Countries: Amiri also complained of a significant effort by Iraq's neighbors to prevent success in Iraq in order to forestall political change in their own countries. "The success of this project means the winds of change will reach them." For this reason, he continued, they give "unlimited support" to the terrorists and so-called resistance in Iraq.

Lack of Security and Response from MNF-I/ISF Led to Militia Formation

¶4. (C) Amiri said he was reluctant to criticize U.S. forces, but charged that MNF-I and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) had helped contribute to the escalation in sectarian tensions. Their failure to respond adequately to attacks on Iraq's communities, he claimed, had forced these communities to turn to militias for protection. He acknowledged that development of militias is taking place at the expense of the state, but stressed that in light of MNF-I and ISF's inability to provide security, Iraqis have no alternative.

¶5. (C) Amiri advocated the following steps for addressing the current deterioration:

-- Identify who is responsible for security in Iraq. It is not clear who between MNF-I and ISF is responsible, Amiri claimed. Unless this lack of clarity is solved, the security situation will not be solved. There needs to be one command with full authority and accountability.

-- Strengthen the GOI, as Iraq's national unity government elected in accordance with the constitution. If this government fails, no other

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government will be able to save Iraq.

-- Accelerate the building and training of the ISF.

-- Provide services to the people, especially in secured areas. He complained that a lot of areas are safe, but nonetheless do not receive assistance or services.

-- Eliminate all faces of violence. Weapons should be exclusively in the hands of the ISF and anyone who carries them illegally should be immediately arrested.

-- Confront quasi-official militias like the Facility Protection Service (FPS). The FPS is made up of 33 subgroups and 140,000 members. They have weapons, permits, and cars but are not accountable to the state and are part of the problem.

-- Implement CPA Order 91 to disband militias that existed

prior to liberation and integrate some of their members into the ISF. Amiri insisted that the U.S. is not serious about its own law and is blocking its implementation.

-- Put pressure on neighboring governments who are major contributors to the violence in Iraq.

-- Activate the judiciary. In this context, Amiri spoke of the need for harsh action against those attacking and undermining the new Iraq.

Echoing a charge Hannah heard from Foreign Minister Zebari (septel), Amiri claimed that if the violence in Iraq were happening in the U.S., the government would be hanging people from lampposts. Amiri noted that in Britain, those who incite violence are arrested, yet in Iraq, the media and mosques that openly encouraged violence were left untouched.

Badr No Longer a Militia and Not an Agent of Iran

¶6. (C) Hannah expressed appreciation for the restraint of the Shi'a community (particularly Ayatollah Sistani) in the face of attacks by Saddamists and takfiris. Hannah raised U.S. concerns and suspicions over Badr's role in fueling sectarian violence and its long-running relationship with the Iranian IRGC, identifying both as obstacles to a better relationship with America. Amiri replied that Badr had been an armed resistance group against Saddam but that after liberation former SCIRI leader Muhammad Bakr al-Hakim had ordered Badr to turn into a political group, which it did. "We are participating in the government. I am part of the government, and am the head of the defense committee (in the CoR). Why do we need militias? I believe we should support the government and abandon militias. We tried to do so under Bremer (with CPA order 91), but you are the ones who hesitated." Amiri stated that no one has ever produced any evidence that Badr is involved in any militia activities or has been infiltrated by Iranian intelligence or retaliating against former Baathists. He said directly, "If a Badr member is carrying a weapon, he should be

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disarmed; if he resists, he should be killed." He said he welcomed General Casey and MNF-I to bring to him any evidence of Badr involvement in sectarian violence or attacks against the coalition, and promised to take action against any transgressors.

¶7. (C) Amiri suggested that since all of what the "street" says about U.S. abuses is so obviously false and conspiratorial (and a

product of propaganda by the Saddamists and Takfiris), the U.S. should consider that the same may be even more true when it comes to Sunni charges against Badr and the Shi'a. Amiri dismissed concerns about Iranian influence over Badr, arguing that Badr would have preferred to work to overthrow Saddam from an Arab country, but that it was not welcomed by Iraq's neighbors. He said that before moving to Iran he himself had first tried to work from Syria against Saddam, but that the government had barred him from doing so. Badr was grateful for a place to train and did not try to hide its good relations with Iran or the fact that Iran provided financial assistance to Badr as did other countries. But he also stressed that Badr's members were not treated well or trusted by Iran, and compared Badr's exile in Iran to that of DeGaulle in Britain. Amiri insisted that if Badr was simply an Iranian agent, it would have conducted operations against U.S. forces. He told Hannah that Kurdish parties also had long-established political, financial, and security relationships with Iran (including the IRGC), but that this did not make the Kurds agents of Iran. The same, he implied, was true of Badr. Amiri stressed to Hannah at the close of their meeting the importance of establishing a strong strategic partnership between the United States and its Iraqi allies, and pledged to be of assistance if the U.S. had evidence of Iranian involvement in targeting U.S. troops.

¶8. (U) This cable was cleared by OVPNSA John Hannah.
KHALILZAD